THE LADY OF LYNN

By SIR WALTER BESANT

CHAPTER I.

THE HEIRESS AND THE POET.

THE happiest day of my life up to that time, because I should be the basest and the most ungrateful of men were I not to confess that I have since enjoyed many days far excelling in happiness that day, was the 20th day of June in the year of grace 1747.

For on that day, being my nineteenth birthday, I was promoted, though so young, to be mate or chief officer on board my ship, the Lady of Lynn, Captain Jaggard, then engaged in the Lisbon trade.

I will tell you presently how I was so fortunate as to be apprenticed to so fine a craft as the Lady of Lynn. Just now it is enough to set down that she was the finest vessel in the little fleet of ships belonging to my young mistress, Molly Miller, ward of Captain Crowle. There were eight ships, all her own—the Lady of Lynn, the ship in which I served my apprenticeship; the Jolly Miller, named after her father; the Lovely Molly, after herself; the Joseph and Jennifer, after her parents; the Pride of Lynn, the Beauty of Lynn, the Glory of Lynn and the Honor of Lynn—all of which you may take if you like as named after their owner. Molly owned them all.

I have to tell you in this place why one day in especial must ever be remembered by me as the most surprising and the happiest that I had ever known.

I was standing on the quarter deck on duty when the boy came up the companion, saying that the captain wanted to speak to me. So I followed, little thinking of what he had to say, expecting no more than some question about log or cargo, such as the skipper is always putting to his officers.

In the captain's cabin, however, I found sitting at the table not only Captain Jaggard himself, but my old friend and patron, Captain Crowle. His jolly face was full of satisfaction and good humor, so that it gave one pleasure only to look at him. But he sat upright and assumed the air of dignity which spoke of the quarter deck. A man who has walked that part of the ship in command doth never lose the look of authority.

"John Pentecrosse," he began, "I have sent for you in order to inform you that on the recommendation of Captain Jaggard here"—Captain Jaggard gravely inclined his head in acquiescence—"and with the consent of Miss Molly Miller, sole proprietor of this good ship, the Lady of Lynn, I have promoted you to the rank of chief officer."

"Sir!" I cried, overwhelmed, for indeed I had no reason to expect this promotion for another two or three years. "What can I say?"

"We don't want you to say anything, Jack, my lad." The captain came down from the quarter deck and became my old friend again. "Give me your hand. You're young, but there's never a better sailor afloat, is there, Captain Jaggard?"

"None, Captain Crowle; none for his years."

"For his years naturally. He's salt through and through, isn't he, Captain Jaggard?"

"And through, Captain Crowle." My skipper was a man of grave aspect and few words.

"Well, then, let us drink the lad's health." And upon that the cabin boy, who needed no further order, dived into the locker, produced a bottle, opened it and placed three glasses.

"No better Lisbon," said Captain Jaggard, pouring it out. "Goes even to the table of the king. God bless him!"

"Now, gentlemen"—Captain Crowle pushed a glass to me—"first a glass to Miss Molly, my little maid. Jack, you've been her playfellow, and you're now her servant."

"I could ask nothing better, sir."

"I know—a good and zealous servant. Drink it off, a full glass, running over, to Molly Miller."

We obeyed, nothing loath.

"And now, Captain Jaggard, here's the health of your new mate, long to serve under you, your right hand, your eyes open when you are off the deck, your sailing master, the keeper of your log. Jack Pentecrosse, I drink to your good luck."

That was the event which made this day the happiest in my life. Another event of which I thought little at the time was more important still in the after consequences. This was the humiliation of Samuel Semple.

In the evening as soon as I could get ashore I repaired, as in duty bound, to pay my respects to my young mistress. She was sitting in the summer house with some needlework. Beside her sat her good old black woman, Nigra.

"Jack!" She dropped her work and jumped up to meet me. "I thought you would come this evening. Oh, are you pleased?"

"You knew I should come, Molly. Why, have I not to thank you for my promotion?"

She gave me her hand with her sweet frankness and her smiling face.

"I would make you captain, Jack, but my guardian will not hear of it. All in good time, though. I am only waiting. I am proud of you, Jack, because everybody speaks so well of you. I met your father this morning and gave him the good news to rejoice his good old heart. He was too proud to confess his joy. But we know him, don't we, Jack? Well, I confess I shall not be happy till you are Captain Pentecrosse, with a share in every cargo."

"Nay, Molly, the ship is yours, and I am but your servant, though a proud and joyful servant."

And so we sat and talked, while Nigra went on with her work, sitting at the feet of her mistress, whom she watched all the time as a dog keeps one eye always upon his master.

At this time my mistress was 16, a time when many girls are already married. But she was still a child, or a young girl at heart, being one of those who, like a fine Orleans plum, ripen slowly and are all the better for the time they take. In person, if I may speak of what should be sacred, she was finely made, somewhat taller than the average, her hair of that fair color which is the chief glory of the English maiden. If a Lisbon girl could show that fair hair, with those blue eyes and that soft cheek touched with ruddy hue and the velvet bloom of the September peach, she would draw after her the whole town, with the king and his court and even the grand inquisitor and his accursed crew of torturers.

She was of a truly affectionate disposition, her mind being as lovely as her face. In manners she was easy and compliant, in discourse sometimes grave and sometimes merry. As for her great possessions, she was so simple in her tastes and habits, being in all respects like the daughter of a plain merchantman's skipper, that she understood little or nothing of what these possessions meant or what they might bestow upon her.

No one, however, must believe that there was any thought or discourse concerning love between us. I had been her companion and playfellow. I knew her very mind and could tell at any time of what she was thinking. Sometimes her thoughts were of high and serious things. Mostly they were of things simple, such as the prospects of the last brew or the success of the latest cordial. Of suitors she had none, although she was now, as I said, 16 years of age. There were no suitors. I very well know why, because, perhaps for friendly reasons, Captain Crowle had told me something of his ambition for his ward. She was too rich and too good for the young men of Lynn. What would any of them do with such an heiress? She was too rich and too good even for the gentlefolk of the county, a hearty, rough, good natured people who hunted and shot and feasted and drank. What would they do with an heiress of wealth beyond their highest bones had they any knowledge of her wealth? But I believe that they had none. No one knew how rich she was except the captain. The girl was intended by her guardian for some great man. He knew not as yet how he should find this great man, but he knew that there were very few, even of the noble lords in the house of peers, whose fortune or whose income would compare with that of his ward—his little maid. And I, who knew this ambition, knew also that I was trusted not to betray confidence nor to disturb the girl's mind by any talk of love. Now, the mind of a young maid piously disposed is like the surface of a calm sea, which looks up to the sky and reflects the blue of heaven, undisturbed till Dan Cupid comes along and agitates the calm with the reflection of some shepherd swain and ripples the surface with new thoughts which are allowed by heaven, but belong not to any of its many mansions.

Therefore we talked of everything except love.

The sun went down as we sat talking. The sun went down, and the soft twilight of June, the month which most I love because there is no darkness and a man on watch can discern ahead breakers and ships as well as the vast circle of the rolling sea. And then Nigra gathered her work together and arose.

"Come to supper, honey," she said, "Come, Massa Jack," and she led the way.

Supper over, the captain, instead of turning round his chair to the fireplace, filling his pipe and calling for another glass of October, as we expected, pushed back his chair and rose with dignity.

"Jennifer," he addressed Molly's mother, "the persuader."

Jennifer was her Christian name. She got up and drew from the corner by the cupboard a stout crab tree cudgel, twisted and gnarled like the old tree from which it came. "Be not revengeful, John," she said.

"No, no. I am a justice of the peace. I am captain on my own quarter deck. Punishment I shall bestow, not revenge."

"Well, John, but he is young, and you are old."

Captain Crowle laughed. "Young, is he? And I am old, am I? We shall see."

Some one was going to be tried, judged, found guilty, sentenced and to receive his sentence at once. The thing was not unusual in the house of a justice of the peace.

"Come with me, Jack. It shall not be said that I inflicted this punishment without a witness. All the world shall know about it, if so be the culprit desires. Come with me, Jennifer, keep within, and if you hear groans praise the Lord for the correction of a sinner."

Greatly marveling, I followed the captain as he marched out of the parlor. Arrived at the garden, he looked around. "So," he said, "he has not yet come. Perhaps it is light enough for you to read some of his pernicious stuff." With that he put his hand into his pocket and drew forth a paper. "Read that, Jack, I say, read it."

I obeyed. The twilight gave sufficient light for reading the manuscript. Besides, the writing was large and in bold characters. "Why," I said, "I know this writing. It is Sam Semple's."

"Very good. Go on, therefore"—

At the very first words I understood what had already happened and guessed pretty well what was going to happen.

"Molly divine! Thy heavenly charms prevail,
As when the sun doth rise stars fade and pale."

"No need for much more of the rubbish, Jack. Read the last of it. I read it all, and it made me sick."

"So, matchless maid, thy silence grants consent,
See, at thy feet, the poet's knee is bent
When evening roses scatter fragrance faint
And the sad Philomel renews his plaint."

"Did ever man hear such stuff, Jack? Go on."

"Within this bow'r, afar from sight of men,
Tomorrow, Wednesday, at the hour of ten,
That bow'r, a shrine of love and temple fair,
I will await thee—Samuel Semple—there."

"What do you think of that, Jack? Samuel Semple, the ragged, skulking, sniveling, impudent son of a thieving exciseman! A very fine lover for my little maid! Ha, will he? Will he?" The captain grasped his cudgel with resolution.

"Sir!" I said, with submission, "What did Molly say to this precious epistle?"

"Molly? Dost think that I would let the little maid see such ranting stuff? Not so. The black woman brought the precious letters to me. There are three of them. Wait, Jack. Thou shalt see. Hush! I hear his step. Let us get into the summer house and lie snug to see what happens."

We stepped into the summer house, now pretty dark, and waited expectant.

Like the captain, I was filled with amazement that Samuel, whom I knew well, who was my schoolfellow, should presume to lift his eyes so high. Alas! There is no bound or limit. I am assured, to the presumption of such as this stringer of foolish rhymes. Yet I felt some compunction for him because he would most assuredly receive a basting such as would cure him effectually of the passion called love, so far as this object was concerned.

Presently we heard footsteps crunching the gravel. "Snug, my lad. Lie snug," whispered the captain. We heard the steps making their way along the path between the gooseberry and currant bushes. Then they came out upon the grass lawn before the summer house. "The grass is as big as a quarter deck, Jack," said the captain. "It will serve for the basting of a measly clerk. I've knocked down many a mutinous dog in the quarter deck."

The poet came to the summer house and stood outside, irresolute. He could not see the two occupants. He hemmed twice aloud. There was no reply. "Matchless Molly!" he whispered. "Divine maid! I am here at thy feet. Nymph of the azure sea, I am here."

"The devil you are!" cried the captain, stepping out. "Why, here is a precious villain for you! Jack, cut him off in the rear if he tries to get away. So—so, my young quill driver, you would poach on the preserves of your betters, would you? Would you? Would you?" At each repetition he banged the wooden post of the summer house with his cudgel.

The poet made no reply, but he looked to right and to left and behind him for a way of escape, but found none,

for I was ready to bar his flight, wherefore his shoulders became rounded and his head hung down and his knees trembled. Samuel Semple was caught in a trap. Some young fellows would have made a fight of it, but not Samuel. All he thought about was submission and nonresistance, which might provoke pity.

"Three times, jackanapes, hast thou presumed to send stuff to my ward. Here they are." He took from me the last sheet of doggerel verse and drew from his pocket two more. "Here they are—one, two, three—all addressed to the matchless Molly. Why, thou impudent villain, what devil prompted thee to call her matchless Molly? Matchless to such as you! Take that, shrah, and that!" They were laid on with a will. The poet groaned, but made no reply, again looking vainly to right and left for some way of escape.

The basting which followed was really worthy of the days when Captain Crowle with his own hand quelled a mutiny and drove the whole crew under hatches.

It was a poor, shrinking, trembling figure full of bruises and aches and pains that presently arose and slunk away. I should have felt sorry for him had he taken punishment like a man. Why, I would maroon any of my crew who would cry and grovel and snivel when tied up for his three dozen. It made one sick and ashamed to see him and to hear him, with his "Mercy, captain! Oh, enough, good captain! Oh, captain, I confess! I deserve it all. Never again, captain. Oh, forgiveness, forgiveness!" and so on. I say it made me sick and ashamed. When all was over, I followed him to the garden gate. "Oh, Jack," he groaned, "you stood by and saw it all! I am a dead man. He shall be hanged for it. You are the witness. I am nothing but a bag of broken bones, ribs and collar bones and skull. I am a poor, unfortunate, murdered man. I am done to death with a cudgel."

"Go home," I said. "You a man? You cry like a whipped cur. Murdered? Not you. Cudgeled you are, and well you deserved it. Go home and get brown paper and vinegar and tell all the town how you have been cudgeled for writing verses to a matchless maid. They will laugh, Sam Semple. They will laugh."

The captain went back to the parlor somewhat flushed with the exercise.

"Justice," he said, "has been done without the cart and the cat. My pipe, Jennifer, and the home brewed. Molly, my dear, your very good health."

A day or two afterward we heard that Sam Semple had gone to London to make his fortune. He was carried thither by the wagon that once a week makes the journey to London, returning the following week. But when Sam Semple came back it was in a chaise, with much splendor, as in due course you shall hear. You shall also hear of the singular gratitude with which he repaid the captain for that wholesome correction.

CHAPTER II

A NOBLE LORD.

IT is three years later. We are now in the year 1750. At 12 o'clock in the morning the anteroom of the townhouse of the right honorable the Earl of Fylingdale was tolerably filled with a mixed company attending his levee.

Soon after 12 o'clock the doors of the private apartments were thrown open, and his lordship appeared wearing the look of dignity and proud condescension combined which well became the star he wore and the ancient title which he had inherited. His age was about 30, a time of life when there linger some remains of youth and the serious responsibilities are yet with some men hardly felt. His face was cold and proud and hard, the lips firmly set, the eyes keen and even piercing, the features regular, his stature tall, but not ungainly; his figure manly. It was remarkable among those who knew him intimately that there was as yet no sign of luxurious living on face and figure. He was not as yet swelled out with wine and punch; his neck was still slender, his face pale, without any telltale marks of wine and debauchery. So far as appearance goes, he might pass if he chose for a person of the most rigid and even austere virtue.

This, as I have said, was considered remarkable by his friends, most of whom were already stamped on face and feature and figure with the outward and visible tokens of a profligate life, for, to confess the truth at the very beginning and not to attempt concealment or to suffer a false belief as regards this nobleman, he was nothing better than a cold blooded, pitiless, selfish libertine, a rake and a voluptuary, one who knew and obeyed no laws save the laws of (so called) honor. These laws allow a man to waste his fortune at the gaming table, to ruin confiding girls, to spend his time with rake companions in drink and riot and debauchery of all kinds. He must, however, pay his gambling debts; he must not cheat at cards; he must be polite in speech; he must be ready to fight whenever the occasion calls for his sword and the quarrel seems of sufficient importance. Lord Fylingdale, however, was not among those who found his chief pleasure scouring the streets and in mad riot. You shall learn in due course what forms of pleasure chiefly attracted him.

I have said that his face was proud. There was not, I believe, any man living in the whole world who could compare with Lord Fylingdale for pride. An overwhelming pride sat upon his brow, was proclaimed by his eyes and was betrayed by his carriage. With such pride did Lucifer look round upon his companions, fallen as they were and in the depths of hopeless ruin.

He was dressed in a manner becoming to his rank. Need we dwell upon his coat of purple velvet, his embroidered waistcoat, his white silk stockings, his lace of ruffles and cravat, his gold buckles and his gold clocks, his laced hat carried under his arm, his jeweled sword hilt and the rings upon his fingers? You would think by his dress that his wealth was equal to his pride, and by his reception of the suitors that his power was equal to both pride and wealth together.

The levee began. One after the other stepped up to him, spoke a few words, received a few words in reply and retired, each apparently well pleased, for promises cost nothing. To the poet who asked for a subscription and proffered a dedication my lord promised the former, accepted the latter and added a few words of praise and good wishes. But the subscription was never paid, and the dedication was afterward altered so far as the superscription to another noble patron. To the clergyman who asked for a country living then vacant my lord promised the most kindly consideration and bade him write his request and send it him by letter for better assurance of remembrance. To the officer he promised his company as only due to gallantry and military skill. To the place hunter he promised a post far beyond the dreams and the hopes of the suppliant. Nothing more came of it to either.

The company grew thin. One after the other the suitors withdrew to feed on promises. It is like opening your mouth to drink the wind. But 'twas all they got.

When they were gone, Lord Fylingdale looked round the room. In the window stood, dangling a cane from his wrist, a gentleman dressed in the highest and the latest fashion.

Yet when one looked more closely it was seen that this gallant exterior arrayed an ancient gentleman whose years were proclaimed by the sharpening of his features, the wrinkles of his feet, the crow's feet round his eyes and his bending shoulders, which he continually endeavored to set square and upright. Hat in one hand and snuffbox in the other, he ambled toward his lordship on tiptoe, which happened just then to be the fashionable gait.

"Thy servant, Sir Harry." My lord offered him his hand with condescension. "It warms my heart to see thee. Therefore I sent a letter. Briefly, Sir Harry, wouldst do me a service?"

"I am always at your lordship's commands. This, I hope, I have proved."

"Then, Sir Harry, this is the case. It is probable that for certain private reasons I may have to pay a visit to a country town, a town of tarpaulins and traders, not a town of fashion." Sir Harry shuddered. "Patience, my friend. I know not how long I shall endure the barbaric company. But I must go. There are reasons—let me whisper, reasons of state, important secrets—which call me there." Sir Harry smiled and looked incredulous. "I want on the spot a friend." Sir Harry smiled again, as one who began to understand—"a friend who would appear to be a stranger. Would you, therefore, play the part of such a friend?"

"I will do whatever your lordship commands. Yet to leave town at this season"—it was then the month of April—"the assembly, the park, the card table, the society of the ladies—It is possible that the Lady Anastasia may go there. She will, as usual, keep the bank if she does go."

The old beau's face cleared, whether in anticipation of Lady Anastasia's society or her card table I know not.

"My character, Sir Harry, will be in your hands. I leave it there confidently. For reasons—reasons of state—it should be a character of"—

"I understand. Your lordship is a model of all the virtues"—

"So we understand. My secretary will converse with thee further on the point of expenditure."

Sir Harry retired, bowing and twisting his body something like an ape.

Then a gentleman in scarlet presented himself.

"Your lordship's most obedient," he said, with scant courtesy. "I come in obedience to your letter of command."

"Colonel, you will hold yourself in readiness to go into the country. There will be play. You may lose as much as you please to Sir Harry Malyus or to any one else whom my secretary will point out to you. Perhaps you may have to receive a remonstrance from me. We are strangers, remember, and I am no gambler, though I sometimes take a card." And he, too, retired.

There remained one suitor. He was a clergyman dressed in a fine silk cassock with bands of the whitest and a noble wig of the order ecclesiastic. I doubt if the archbishop himself had a finer.

"Good, my lord," he said. "I am, as usual, a suppliant. The rectory of St. Leonard le Size, Jewry, in the City, is now vacant. With my small benefices in the country it would suit me hugely. A word from your lordship to the lord mayor—the rectory is in the gift of the corporation—would, I am sure, suffice."

"You are living, as usual, I suppose, at great expense."

"At small expense considering my abilities, but still at greater expense than my slender income will allow. Am I not your lordship's domestic chaplain? Must I not keep up the dignity due to the position?"

"Your dignity is costly. I must get a bishopric or a deanery for you. Meantime I have a small service to ask of you."

"Small? My lord, let it be great; it cannot be too great."

"It is that you go into the country for me."

"Not to Bath or to Oxford?"

"Not to either; to another place, where they know not thy name or thy fame. Very good. I thought I could depend upon your loyalty. As for arrangements and time, you will hear from my secretary." So my lord turned on his heel, and his chaplain was dismissed.

When the levee was finished and everybody gone, Lord Fylingdale sank into a chair. I know not the nature of his thoughts save that they were not pleasant, for his face grew darker every moment. Finally he sprang to his feet and rang the bell. "Tell Mr. Semple that I would speak with him," he ordered.

Mr. Semple, the same Samuel whom you have seen under a basting from the captain, was now changed and for the better. He wore the dress of a poet. At this time he also called himself secretary to his lordship.

"Semple," said his lordship, crossing his legs and playing with the tassel of his sword knot, "I have read thy letter"—

"Your lordship will impute"—

"First, what is the meaning of the preamble?"

"I have been your lordship's secretary for six months. I have therefore perused all your lordship's letters. I have also in my zeal for your lordship's interests looked about me, and I discovered what I ventured to state in that preamble."

"Well, sir?"

"Namely, that the Fylingdale estates are gone so far as your lordship's life is concerned, but in a word all is gone, and that—your lordship will pardon the plain truth—your lordship's credit cannot last long and that—I now touch a most delicate point to a man of your lordship's nice sense of honor—the only resource left is precarious."

"You mean"—

"I mean a certain lady and a certain bank."

"How, sir? Do you dare? What has put this suspicion into your head?"

"Nay, my lord; I have no thought but for your lordship's interests, believe me."

"And so you tell me about the rustic heiress, and you propose a plan"—

"I have had the temerity to do so."

"Yes. Tell me once more about this girl and about her fortune."

"Her name is Molly Miller. She is an orphan. Her guardian is an honest

sailor who has taken the greatest care of her property. She was an heiress already when her father died. That was 18 years ago. She is now 19."

"Is she passable—to look at? A hoiden with a high color, I warrant."

"A cream colored complexion touched with red and pink, light hair in curls and blue eyes, the face and figure of a Venus, the sweetest mouth in the world and the fondest manner."

"Hang me if the fellow isn't in love with her himself! If she is all this, man, why not apply yourself for the post of spouse?"

"Because her guardian keeps off all would be lovers and destines his ward for a gentleman at least, for a nobleman he hopes."

"He is ambitious. Now as to her fortune."

"She has a fleet of half a dozen tall vessels—nay, there are more, but I know not how many. I was formerly a clerk in a counting house of the town, and I learned a great deal—what each is worth and what the freight of each voyage may produce—but not all. The captain, her guardian, keeps things close. My lord, I can assure you from what I learned in that capacity and by looking into old books that she must be worth over £100,000, over £100,000!"

"I can take this fortune without your assistance."

"With submission, my lord, you cannot. I know too much. The girl's fortune when you have it will go the same way as your rents and woods have gone. Provide for me, therefore, before you begin to spend that money."

"I will give you a life position, with £200 a year. The girl, you say, has no lover."

"She has no lover. Your lordship's rank, your manner, your appearance, will certainly carry the day. By contrast alone with the country bumpkins the heart of the girl will be won."

"Mr. Semple," his lordship yawned, "do you suppose that the heart of the girl concerns me? Go and complete your scheme."

The Lady Anastasia was in her dressing room in the hands of her friseur, the French hairdresser, and her maid. She was the young widow of an old baronet. She was also the daughter of an earl and the sister of his successor. She therefore enjoyed the freedom of a widow, the happiness natural to youth and all the privileges of rank. No woman could be happier. It was reported that her love of the card table had greatly impaired her income. The world said that her own private dowry was wholly gone and a large part of her jointure.

She kept a small establishment in Mount street. Her people consisted of no more than two footmen, a butler, a lady's maid, a housekeeper and three or four maids, with two chairmen. She did not live as a rich woman. She received, it is true, twice a week, on Sundays and Wednesdays, but not with any expense of supper and wine. Her friends came to play cards, and she held the bank for them. On other evenings she went out and played at the houses of her friends.

While the friseur was still completing her head Lord Fylingdale was announced. The lady blushed violently. She sat up and looked anxiously in the glass.

"Betty," she cried, "a touch of red; not much, you clumsy creature! Will you never learn to have a lighter hand? So! That is better. I am horribly pale. His lordship can wait in the morning room. You have nearly finished, monsieur? Quick, then—the last touches! Betty, the flowered satin petticoat! My fan! The pearl necklace! So!" She looked again at the glass. "Am I looking tolerable, Betty?"

"Your ladyship is ravishing," said Betty, finishing the toilet.

Lady Anastasia swam out of the room with a gliding movement, then the fashion, and entered the morning room, where Lord Fylingdale awaited her.

"Anastasia!" he said softly, taking her hand. "It is very good of you to see me alone. I feared you would be surrounded with courtiers and fine ladies or with singers, musicians, hairdressers and other baboons. Permit me," and he raised her hand to his lips. "You look divine this morning. It is long since I have seen you look so perfectly charming."

The lady murmured something. She was one of those women who like above all things to hear praises of what most they prize, their beauty, and to believe what they most desire to be the truth, the preservation and perfecting of that beauty.

"But you came to see me alone. Was it to tell me that I look charming? Other men tell me as much in company."

"Not altogether that, dear lady, though that is something. I come to tell you of a change of plans."

"You have heard that the grand jury of Middlesex has presented me by name as a corrupter of innocence, and I know not what, because I hold my bank on Sunday nights?"

"I have heard something of the matter. It is almost time, I think, to give these presumptuous shopkeepers a lesson not to interfere with the pursuits of persons of rank. Let them confine themselves to the prentices who play at pitch and toss."

"Oh, what matters their resentment? I shall continue to keep the bank on Sunday nights. Now, my dear lord, what about these plans? What is changed?"

"We thought, you remember, about going to Tunbridge in July."

"Well, shall we not go there?"

"Perhaps. But there is something to be done first. Let me confide in you"—

"My dear lord, you have never confided in anybody."

"Except in you. I think you know all my secrets, if I have any. In whom else can I confide? In the creatures who importune me for places? In friends of the green table? In friends of the race course? My dear Anastasia, you know, I assure you, as much about my personal affairs as I know myself."

"If you would always speak so kindly!" Her eyes became humid, but not tearful. A lady of fashion must not spoil her cheek by tears.

"Well, then, the case is this: You know of the condition of my affairs—no one better. An opportunity presents itself to effect a great improvement. I am invited by the highest personage to take a more active part in the affairs of state. No one is to know this. For reasons connected with this proposal I am to visit a certain town—a trading town, a town of rough sailors—there to conduct certain inquiries. There is to be a gathering at this town of the gentry and people of the county. Would you like to go, my dear friend? It will be next month."

"To leave town and in May, just before the end of the season?"

"There will be opportunities. I am told, of holding a bank, and a good many sportsmen—'tis a sporting county—may be expected to lay their money. In a word, Anastasia, it will not be a bad exchange."

"And how can I help you? Why should I go there?"

"By letting the people, the county people, understand the many virtues and graces which distinguish my character. No one knows me better than yourself"—

The lady smiled. "No one," she murmured.

—"or can speak with greater authority on the subject. There will be certain of our friends there—the parson, Sir Harry, the colonel."

"Pah, a beggarly crew and blown upon! They are dangerous."

"Not at this quiet and secluded town. They will be strangers to you as well as to me. And they will be useful. After all, in such a place you need an opening. They will lead the way."

The lady made no response.

"I may call it settled, then?" He still held her hand. "If you would rather not go, Anastasia, I will find some one else, but I had hoped"—

She drew away her hand. "You are right," she said. "No one knows you so well as myself. And all I know about you is that you are always contriving some devilry. What is it this time? But you will not tell me. You never tell me."

"Anastasia, you do me an injustice. This is a purely political step."

"As you will. Call it what you please. I am your servant, you know that; your handmaid in all things save one. Not for any other woman, Ludovick, not for any other unfortunate woman, will I lift my little finger. Should you betray me in this respect"—

He laughed. "A woman? And in that company? Rest easy, dear child. Be jealous as much as you please, but not with such a cause."

He touched her cheek with his finger. He stooped and kissed her hand and withdrew.

Lady Anastasia stood awhile where he left her. The joy had gone out of her heart. She trembled. She was seized with a foreboding of evil. She threw herself upon the sofa and buried her face in her hands, and, forgetful of paste and patch and paint, she suffered the murderous tears to destroy that work of art, her finished face.

(TO BE CONTINUED.)

BIG FOOT MIKE.

THE ORIGINAL SOONER.

Far to the west in the long ago,
Keeping close to Missouri's flow,
Taen over the plains where the coyotes grow,
Going his best—
But his best was slow—
Headed west in his prairie schooner,
Went Big Foot Mike,
The original sooner.

For Mike had heard
Of the peak of Pike;
He'd been told exactly
What "she" was like,
An the more of Pike's he studied about
The more he wanted to "stake her out,"
An that's the reason why Mike one day
Hitched up his schooner an started away
With an ox, a spade an some shootin tools
An a couple of good Missouri mules.
I ain't quite certain that he did,
But I think Mike carried a wife an kid,
Anyhow I know there was tied behind
A fellowes Mike both night an day,
A family dog of the yellow kind,
An since Mike's time you'll always find
A yellow dog tied on behind
A prairie schooner on its way.

Mike certainly had a queer outfit,
An the natives almost took a fit
Of laughter when they gazed on it,
For on the outside Mike had writ:
"Bound for the west,
In God we trust.
Big Foot Mike,
Pike's peak or bust!"

Some told Mike the peak was a long way out,
But Mike knew exactly what he was about,
An he kep' a-goin, an a-goin, an goin
(For Mike was from Missouri and had to be shown),
An away out yonder was the peak of Pike,
An makin right for her was Big Foot Mike!
I don't exactly know his route,
But a lot of Missourians followed him out,
An it's easy money—if you want to bet—
That a lot of them Pikers are out there yet.
But Mike was away ahead of them all,
For he kep' a-goin spring, summer and fall—
Kep' a-goin west in his prairie schooner,
Big Foot Mike,
The original sooner.

As I said, in the Lord Mike put his trust,
In the hope to get to Pike's or bust.
But if Mike did bust in spite of his trust
I trust an hope, hope he went up right
An kep' a-goin till out of sight,
An I also hope some of his kin
Hearded out an paid him in.
But maybe Mike didn't bust at all,
But reached the peak an saw it all,
For nerve like Mike's
Would earn a dozen men to Pike's.
But I've had trouble enough myself
Without a-stirrin up Big Foot Mike's.

But far to the west in the long ago,
Keeping close to Missouri's flow,
Then over the plains where the coyotes grow,
Headed west in his prairie schooner,
Went Big Foot Mike,
The original sooner.

St. Louis Globe-Democrat.

A Philosopher.

"What makes yer so happy?"

"Why shouldn't I be happy? I ain't got no money to bother me."—New York Journal.

In the Joke Factory.

"Sir," said the expectant writer, "I have here a little joke on a brand new subject which I would like to sell. I know the public tires of the old, stale jokes, and I have made a new one, entirely original, I assure"—

"What's the joke?"

"Why, a man has insomnia, you know, and he goes to church and hears the preacher and sleep comes over—ha, ha! Isn't that"—

Of course the city usually takes care of such cases, and the authorities made no demur when the editor rang for the ambulance and sent the poor fellow to the hospital at the public expense.—Denver Times.

A NECESSARY ADJUNCT.

He—I tell you, there's nothing like a girl and a hammock and a moonlight night.

She (demurely)—Perhaps; but I believe most girls prefer to have a man in addition.—Town Topics.

BOSTONIZED.

"Too previous laughter turns to wrath."
(So runs the Boston saw)
"His cachinnation's best who hath
The ultimate guffaw."
—Philadelphia Press.

A NOISY BURGLAR.

He Disturbs the Man of the House and Receives Severe Treatment.

The noise made by the burglar in the Ferguson pantry, slight as it was, disturbed the light sleeper in the bedroom not far away, and the midnight marauder was surprised a moment later to find himself covered with a big revolver in the hands of determined looking man in a long white robe.

"I hain't done nothin but eat a few cold victuals, mister," stammered the burglar.

"I see," sternly replied George Ferguson, "you have been eating the remains of a cake my wife made for dinner last night. Do you know what I'm going to do with you?"

"Turn me over to the police, I s'pose," gasped the helpless thief.

"Worse that that," said Ferguson, with a ferocious grin. "I'm going to make you eat a quart of health food. It's a new kind my wife heard of and fixed up for us yesterday, and it's pretty dry eating, but you'll eat every particle of it or I'll bore six holes through you. There it is in that big bowl. Turn yourself loose on it!"

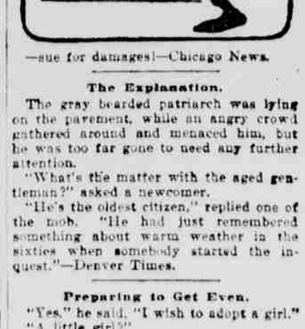
With grim determination the indignant householder stood over him till it was finished, after which he picked up the luckless scoundrel, who had fallen exhausted to the floor, and threw him out of the open pantry window.

"It may kill him," soliloquized Mr. Ferguson somewhat remorsefully as he crawled back into bed without disturbing the rest of the family, "but a man who breaks into another man's house takes his life in his hand anyway."—Chicago Tribune.

Another Break.

Slim (soliloquizing)—It's all right to talk about love's turning a man's head, but when it—

—comes to bending him out of shape it's time to—



—sue for damages!—Chicago News.

The Explanation.

The gray bearded patriarch was lying on the pavement, while an angry crowd gathered around and menaced him, but he was too far gone to need any further attention.

"What's the matter with the aged gentleman?" asked a newcomer.

"He's the oldest citizen," replied one of the mob. "He had just remembered something about warm weather in the sixties when somebody started the inquest."—Denver Times.

Preparing to Get Even.

"Yes," he said, "I wish to adopt a girl."

"A little girl?"

"No; a girl old enough to have energy and perseverence and one who has had enough experience with the piano to make her think she knows how to play it. And if she also thinks she can sing, why, so much the better. I tell you, I am going to get even with the people in the next flat even if I have to adopt two musical prodigies."—Chicago Post.

The Reason.

"If I stand on my head, the blood all rushes to my head, doesn't it."

No one ventures to contradict him.

"Now," he continued triumphantly, "when I stand on my feet, why doesn't the blood all rush to my feet?"

"Because," replied Hostetter McGinnis, "your feet are not empty."

When the Cars Are Crowded.

"Mr. Perkins, you look crushed and yet pleased."

"Yes; on the way out a stout lady sat on me and grumbled because I wouldn't give her more room. Before I got off a stouter lady sat in and sat on her."—Chicago Record-Herald.

Sight Quickly Restored.

"Love, they say, is blind," she remarked casually.

"True," he replied, "but Hymen is a first class oculist."—Chicago Post.

A COMPLETE OUTFIT.

"I am going to spend a week in camp with a party of congenial spirits," said the fat man in the linen suit, as he ordered the bookstore, "and I want a good book to take along—something appropriate, you know."

"Yes, sir," replied the knowing clerk, "we have just what you want in a revised edition of 'How to Mix Drinks.'"—Chicago News.